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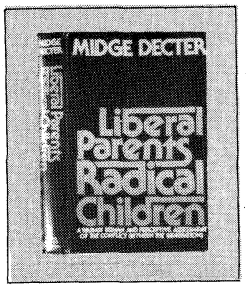
LIBERAL PARENTS, RADICAL CHILDREN

By Midge Decter



Midge Decter has written an eloquent, sometimes bewildering book about the new generation gap that exists between middle-class liberal parents and their so-called radical children, who have not lived up to the achievement-oriented expectations of the enlightened class that spawned them. These children were expected to become the cultural, intellectual, business and political leaders of the future. Instead, they have dropped out of universities, become potheads, joined communes, or become pushcart vendors, taxi drivers, housepainters, movers of furniture, keepers of small shops. In fact, they seem more retarded than radical.

How could a generation of such bright, well-nurtured children, given advantages and care and love as no other generation has been given, wind up as such "failures"? Ms Decter blames the parents. "One need subscribe to no school of thought beyond that of the plainest common sense to be aware," she writes in an opening "Letter to the Young," "that the behavior of the members of my class and generation as parents has had the greatest bearing on your behavior as our children."

What did Decter and the other liberal parents do wrong? "We refused to assume," she writes, "partly on ideological grounds but partly also, I think, on esthetic grounds, one of the central obligations of parenthood: to make ourselves the final authority on good and bad, right and wrong, and to take the consequences of what might turn out to be a lifelong battle. . . . We allowed you a charade of trivial freedoms in order to avoid making those impositions on you that are in the end both the training ground and proving ground for true independence. We pronounced you strong when you were still weak in order to avoid the struggles with you that would have fed your true strength. We proclaimed you sound when you were foolish in order to avoid taking part in the long, slow, slogging effort that is the only route to genuine maturity of mind and feeling."

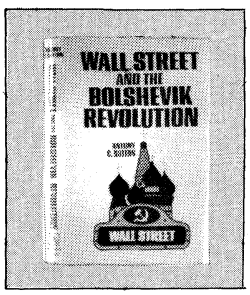
There is no doubt that these liberal parents are to a great extent responsible for having created their radical children. On the other hand, Decter, out of a profound sense of guilt, runs the danger of placing too much blame on these hapless, well-meaning parents, whose crime, apparently, is in having loved their children too much. I would tend to look elsewhere. I would look into that vast, all-pervading American institution known as public education, through which virtually all of our youngsters must pass. In 1970 and '71 I spent eighteen months as a substitute teacher in the high schools and junior high schools of a large Boston suburb, and I can testify that you don't have to come from a professional middle-class liberal family in a fashionable neighborhood to emerge as a hippie or a dropout or a pothead. All you really have to do is simply pass through the 12-year-long process of socialization and intellectual genocide that takes place in our government schools to emerge as the "failure" Decter so eloquently describes.

The proof for this can be found in the fact that American schools are producing the same misfits all over the country, from Texas to California, from Georgia to Maine, from New York to Oregon. Decter's observations merely confirm that the children of liberal, middle-class professionals are no more immune to the intellectually debilitating influences of public education than are the children of auto mechanics, small businessmen, petty bureaucrats, and waitresses. The reason why such failure is more telling among those in Decter's class is because intellectual achievement is a normal expectation among them, whereas it is not among the other social groups. And intellectual achievement is what our educational system specializes in preventing. The look-say method of reading instruction alone, which domintes our educational system, is sufficient to make it impossible for most American children to achieve any high degree of literacy. And without high literacy, intellectual achievement is impossible.

True, Decter and her generation made serious mistakes in the way they raised their children. They were overindulgent and overpermissive. But their most serious mistake was in subjecting their children to a system of education that has produced the greatest generation of intellectual cripples in our history. And so, instead of adding a new guilt complex to those already possessed by the guilt-burdened middle class, I would advise Ms Decter to take a good look into the local schoolhouse. Her next book might be entitled "Liberal Schools, Retarded Children." **Reviewed by Samuel L. Blumenfeld / Sociology—Education / G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975 / $7.95**

WALL STREET AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

By Antony C. Sutton



Up until about a dozen years ago, it was a fundamental belief in proper conservative and related conventional circles that the Communists were to be found in one heap, and the "capitalists" in another, and no one was supposed to more alienated than one was from the other. The only segment of the anti-Communist spectrum that insisted there was some kind of organic relationship between the two might be described as the "radical right," condemned by scholarly respectability because of their emphasis on Jewish capital of some substance at the base of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The picture has changed and broadened substantially in the interim and sustained research plus the opening of long-sealed diplomatic archives has resulted in increasing attention to the part played by Big Finance and Big Industry in the successful floating of the Bolshevik upheaval in Russia. Antony Sutton's latest work, in this vein, is at once a recapitulation of information long known, as well as a revelation in the department of new and electric supporting material to the thesis stated above.

His book should convince even the circles most resistant to the view that capitalists and Communists might get together on something, whose position has been badly shaken by detente and the recent joint Russo-American exploits in space. (Forgotten is the crucial role the USA and Britain played in rescuing Stalinist Soviet Russia from annihilation or gravely shrunken status at the hands of the Germans and Hitler. In retrospect, Roosevelt and Churchill made the world safe for communism, and it has been expanding ever

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Sutton *–(Continued from page 1)*

since, riding on a wave of 30 years of successes, which induces Solzhenitsyn to declare that World War III is already over and the Soviets have won it.) Sutton's impressive trilogy, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development, 1917-1965*, explains another important aspect of this relationship.

In the book under review here, Sutton has performed an extremely useful task for those who are just becoming acquainted with the subject, tying together previously published materials and hitherto unavailable evidence of some significance, mined from the archives of both the U.S. State Department and the British Foreign Office. The third appendix of documents to this essentially modest little book is alone worth the price.

The writing has a tendency to be repetitive, as the same tale and many of the same characters reappear in additional episodes or contexts. But when Sutton gets through, there is not much one can do to try to discount or brush off the significant part played by major economic factors of the West in launching Lenin and Trotsky on their rocketlike trip to the top of Russian affairs. For many, it may be the first time they have come to realize that there are capitalists and there are capitalists (these days even Big Agriculture has got into the act with the repeated vast grain sales to the Brezhnev regime), and that there is only the faintest link, if any, between firms whose resources are spelled out in 12 figures and the corner banana stand operator or the house-to-house thread peddler.

A succession of opulent and fragrant personalities wanders across Sutton's pages, most of them quite innocent of intellectual persuasions linked to socialist theory and as remote from revolutionary ambitions as a turnip. But their interest in floating loans to the Bolsheviks, contributing substantially to their various intrigues, and panting for the opportunity to become major and sustaining suppliers of vast amounts of goods and services to such a regime is most instructive. On the surface, the latter would appear to be one which one would never believe would tarnish the pure blue light of proletarian socialism with such crass complications, but the record demonstrates a mutual eagerness to collaborate and cooperate.

Sutton's treatment of Olof Aschberg and the American International Corporation is superior, as is his extended emphasis on the peculiar interest and role of selected diplomats in a number of strategically located spots in the world, the continuous involvement of the Morgan name, and his debunking of John Reed and Raymond Robins.

The book suffers from a number of editorial lapses, which are not the author's responsibility. The use of contractions and familiar phraseology is awkward in formal writing. There are several mistakes in names in both text and index (e.g., it is "Beekman Winthrop," not "Beckman Winthrope"); Murmansk becomes "Murman" in one instance; Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, though the addressee of an important document, is only partially identified in the text and omitted from the index; the German diplomat Franz von Papen's last name is spelled correctly and incorrectly on successive pages, only one of which makes the index, wherein he is also given a new first name, "Fritz." If this were a tweedy, pipe-sucking review, one could go on in this vein for some time. However, the book is attractively printed and readable, and the substance is, after all, the main consideration.

After reading this, you may recall the wry prediction attributed to Lenin (probably much garbled) that when the time comes for the Communists to hang the capitalists, the latter will be spiritedly trying to outbid one another to supply the Communists with the rope. I have a suspicion that there is another possibility: the hanging of capitalists will be *very* selective, and there will be no competitive bidding on the rope contract, as this will be awarded in secrecy to a trillion-dollar multinational corporation, whose board chairman will likely be a nominee for an honorary membership on the Politburo. **Reviewed by James J. Martin / History / Arlington House, 1974 / $7.95**

A HUMANE ECONOMY : THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FREE MARKET

By Wilhelm Röpke

As I write this, they're strip-mining Death Valley. A firm finds it has the legal right and profits from it. As I write this, commercial fishermen are killing dolphins to catch tuna at a lower cost. As I finished the last sentence I was interrupted: a telephone solicitor telling me of a "super-low demonstration price" just for me.

As I write this, there lie on my table a dozen exhortations to expand my credit and let me spend money I have not earned; and as I write this, capitalists are growing wealthy selling trade goods to the Communist empire.

Is there anything more dull than a young convert to libertarianism? Yes, of course: three of them. At a recent science fiction convention a team of the creatures went from party to party, engaging loudly in their favorite–indeed their only–topic of conversation. Having disrupted a panel discussion of spacecraft–they wanted to prove that the ships would be free only if the radar operator had the right to sell his equipment and exchange jobs with the agronomist–they proceeded to the parties. Before the night was over the hosts at the various room parties had all retreated to a private suite to escape from their own rooms.

What has this to do with Röpke's *A Humane Economy?* At least this: Röpke understands that there is more to life than commercialism; that Burke was not blathering when he spoke of the unbought grace of life; that friendships are not mere commercial propositions of mutual exploitation; that "scientific" attempts to reduce all human intercourse to a series of profit-making transactions are precarious when they're not silly; that there is a realm of life above and beyond the marketplace, and unless that realm is given its proper due, the market economy is doomed.

Röpke repeats with Burke that the State is more than a sort of business company, and with Ortega that mass anything, including commercialism gone riot, is dangerous to humane life.

> The rights of the community are no less imperative than those of the individual, but exaggeration of the rights of the community in the form of collectivism is just as dangerous as exaggerated individualism in its extreme form, anarchism. Ownership ends in plutocracy, authority in bondage and despotism, democracy in arbitrariness and demagogy. Whatever political tendencies or currents we choose as examples, it will be found that they always sow the seeds of their own destruction when they lose their sense of proportion and overstep their limits. In this field, suicide is the normal cause of death.
>
> The market economy is no exception to the rule.

This is Röpke at his best. For me there has never been a more powerful defense of economic liberty than *A Humane Economy* precisely because Röpke understands its limits. His attack on social rationalism, whether of the Left or the Right, is as devastating as it is witty.

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